



Nutrition Assistance for the Gulf States

At the direction of President Obama, USDA is closely coordinating with other federal departments to meet the immediate and long-term needs of States affected by the Gulf oil spill. The federal government's effort is being run by the U.S. Coast Guard.

And while the full impact of the spill on the regional economy of the Gulf States is not known yet, USDA continues to communicate with state officials in the affected region to ensure that their needs are met and USDA services are not interrupted. USDA continues to closely monitor the situation and is providing support to the response efforts such as personnel and resources.

USDA shares the Gulf States' concern for the impact the recent oil spill could have on the nutrition needs of affected families.

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack has pledged USDA's support and technical assistance to Gulf Coast State Governors in helping States make use of all available options to ease access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for many thousands of low-income people in the area, not only for those affected by the oil spill, but all low-income people in those States.

SNAP can respond rapidly and effectively to economic downturns and disruptions. USDA will continue to work with the States to reach all those that are eligible and provide technical assistance on SNAP policy options and waivers available to improve access and ease the process of applying for and receiving needed food assistance. USDA applauds the swift actions of Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi to join Alabama in implementing broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) to help families who have lost income in the recent oil spill events, but still have modest resources. With BBCE, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi are excluding those resources from the eligibility determination, especially resources received due to the oil spill (e.g. lump sum insurance payments, payments received from BP or business accounts) for all households.

For information about how to apply for SNAP benefits in the Gulf States, call the following hotlines:

Alabama - 1-800-382-0499

Florida - 1-866-762-2237

Louisiana - 1-888-524-3578

Mississippi – 1-800-948-3050

Texas – 211 (in State calls only)

Additionally, other USDA nutrition assistance programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Summer Food Service Program, and The Emergency Food Assistance Program each offer particular sources of help to children and their families as States deal with the economic effects of the oil spill.

Information about USDA nutrition assistance programs is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/deepwater.htm>.